

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 071597 TOSEC 030178

EXDIS - FOR S/S

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, FR, US

SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR COUNTRY BRIEFING PAPER

1. UPDATE ON FRANCE -- GISCARD HAS RESPONDED TO THE GOVERN-
ING PARTIES DEFEAT IN THE RECENT MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS BY
REMOVING FROM THE CABINET THEIR THREE SENIOR REPRESENTA-
TIVES -- GUICHARD FOR THE GAULLISTS, PONIATOWSKI FOR THE
INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS AND LECANUET FOR THE CENTRISTS
HOWEVER, THE NEW GOVERNMENT NAMED MARCH 30 CONTAINS FEW
OTHER CHANGES. BARRE STAYS ON AS PRIME MINISTER AND MINIS-
TER OF FINANCE, DE GUIRINGAUD AS FOREIGN MINISTER, AND
BOURGES, A GAULLIST, AS DEFENSE MINISTER. THERE ARE ONLY
TWO NEW FACES IN THE CABINET, PLUS ONE STATE SECRETARY
PROMOTED TO FULL MINISTER. OF THESE THE AUTHOR, DIPLOMAT,
AND TRADITIONAL GAULLIST ALAIN PEYREFITTE AT THE JUSTICE
MINISTRY IS THE ONLY FIGURE OF NOTE.

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2. IN RETAINING MOST OF HIS MINISTERS, AND KEEPING THE
BALANCE AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES (THE GAULLISTS, NOW
WITH FOUR MINISTERS OUT OF SIXTEEN ARE marginally
STRENGTHENED) GISCARD SEEMS TO BE DETERMINED TO STICK TO
THE BASIC POLITICAL STRATEGY HE HAS FOLLOWED SINCE REPLAC-
ING CHIRAC AS PRIME MINISTER LAST SUMMER. THE ELEMENTS OF
THIS STRATEGY SEEM TO BE:

-- RELIANCE ON THE SUCCESS OF BARRE'S ECONOMIC STABILIZATION PROGRAM TO SWING VOTERS BACK TO SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNING PARTIES;

-- PROJECTION OF A REFORMIST IMAGE, INCLUDING THE ESPOUSAL OF CERTAIN NEW REFORMS, PROVIDED THEY DO NOT CARRY TOO HEAVY A PRICE TAG;

-- MAINTENANCE OF PRESENT GOVERNING COALITION, BUT WITHOUT ALLOWING AS LARGE A ROLE FOR CHIRAC AS HIS SUCCESS IN THE PARIS MAYORAL RACE MIGHT SEEM TO JUSTIFY; AND,

-- HOLDING THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE, IN MARCH OF 1978.

3. GISCARD APPARENTLY WISHES TO SIMULTANEOUSLY DIRECT GOVERNMENT POLICY, RISE ABOVE POLITICS, OPPOSE THE LEFT COALITION, AND POSITION HIMSELF TO REMAIN IN OFFICE SHOULD THE LEFT NEVERTHELESS WIN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. THERE IS SO FAR NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HE WILL BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN SUSTAINING THIS DELICATE BALANCE OVER THE NEXT YEAR THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST.

4. GISCARD'S AIDES HAVE TOLD US THAT HE INTENDS TO RAISE THE FOLLOWING ISSUES WITH YOU.

-- THE LONDON SUMMIT. HE REMAINS UPSET THAT THE USG HAS INSISTED ON INCLUDING NON-ECONOMIC ISSUES.

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-- AFRICA. HE FEELS THE USG IS GOING TOO FAR TOO FAST TOWARD SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. HE IS CONCERNED OVER ZAIRE AND THE SOVIET THREAT.

-- CONVENTIONAL ARMS RESTRAINTS. HE FEELS THAT THE EFFECT OF OUR POLICIES WILL BE TO SHUT FRANCE OUT OF THE MORE LUCRATIVE ARMS MARKETS, SUCH AS THE MIDDLE EAST.

-- COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN. HE FEARS THAT AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS WILL INEXORABLY LEAD TO SEVERE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES ON FRANCE TO CEASE ITS NUCLEAR TESTING.

-- EUROCOMMUNISM. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION HAS GIVEN THE FRENCH SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS ASSURANCES OF NEUTRALITY, AND THAT THE USG IS NOW RELATIVELY INDIFFERENT TOWARD THE PROSPECT OF A LEFT VICTORY IN FRANCE. HE WONDERS WHY THE USG HAS NOT PUBLICLY DENIED SUCH ALLEGATIONS.

CONCORDE.

BRIEFING MATERIAL HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO YOU ON EACH OF THE ABOVE ITEMS.

5. YOU SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE THAT FOREIGN MINISTER DE GUIRINGAUD DIRECTED A FORMAL PROTEST TO OUR EMBASSY ON MARCH 16 OVER REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO UN AMBASSADOR YOUNG IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE MONTHLY MAGAZINE "AFRICA". THE REMARKS CITED WERE: "YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING WITH THE FRENCH THEY DO ANYTHING THEY WANT TO DO AND SEEM TO GET AWAY WITH IT. IT'S AMAZING. THEY GET ON ALL SIDES OF EVERY ISSUE."

6. WHILE IT IS UNLIKELY THAT DE GUIRINGAUD WILL RAISE THESE REMARKS WITH YOU, YOU MAY WISH TO INDICATE TO BOTH HIM AND GISCARD THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO FRENCH VIEWS ON CONFIDENTIAL

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AFRICA, AND THE VALUE WE PLACE ON COOPERATION WITH THEM, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE IN THAT AREA.
CHRISTOPHER

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